

Protecting Structures from **ARSON**

ARSON FACTS

Arson is the leading cause of property loss due to fire. Over a half million arson fires, including 100,000 building fires, cost our nation more than \$2 billion annually and kill over 700 people. It costs our communities so much more! One-fourth of all fires are arson and over one-half of them are set by juveniles.



Federal Emergency Management Agency
National Arson Prevention Initiative



PROTECTING STRUCTURES

ILLUMINATE EXTERIOR AND ENTRANCES.

Install lights covering all sides of the building including the parking lots. Motion activated lighting, which is very inexpensive, should be placed near the entrances. Don't advertise that the building is empty. Interior lights on timers give the illusion that the building is occupied.

PAINT BUILDINGS A LIGHT COLOR.

Arsonists work mostly at night. Buildings with a dark exterior provide many hiding places for arsonists.

INSTALL BURGLAR AND FIRE ALARM SYSTEMS THAT TRANSMIT A MESSAGE.

Alarm devices can be inexpensively wired through the telephone circuits to transmit an alarm to the police or fire department. Check the cost of contracting with a security firm for response to alarms.

HAVE YOUR HEATING AND AIR CONDITIONING SYSTEMS CHECKED SEMI-ANNUALLY.

Ensure that your electrical service is adequate for current demands.

TRIM, OR REMOVE SHRUBBERY AND SIGNS THAT OBSTRUCT THE VIEW OF THE BUILDING FROM THE STREET.

Make sure that nothing blocks the view of the building. During the growing season, bushes and trees may need to be trimmed frequently.

KEEP DOORS LOCKED AND BOLTED WITH HINGE-PINS ON THE INSIDE.

Most buildings have too many keyed doors. Reduce the number of keyed doors and keep a record of who has a key. If you don't know who has a key to your building, change the locks. If a key is lost, change the locks. It is generally not necessary to have more than one or two doors with key locks. All other doors should be equipped with dead bolts or, in assembly areas, panic hardware that will permit exiting when doors are locked.

KEEP WINDOWS LOCKED, BARRED OR PROTECTED WITH WIRE SCREENS.

The hardware used to lock windows can sometimes be easily forced with a credit card or other tool. The best type of window hardware has spring-loaded bolts that insert through the window frame into the wall frame. If bars are used on windows in congregation areas, make certain they can be released from the inside, in the event the window is needed as an emergency escape.

RESTRICT ACCESS TO THE ROOF AND UPPER FLOORS.

Nothing is gained by protecting windows and doors at ground level if trespassers have easy access to upper floors. Install fire escapes or stairs that cannot be accessed at ground level. If an exterior stairway exists, close the property with a fence and locked gate.

CONSIDER FENCING THE PROPERTY.

Churches and public buildings generally provide an open welcoming facade, but it is not necessary that the back and sides also provide easy access. Privacy fences provide arsonists privacy. Woven wire fences with locked gates are a better choice.

DESIGNATE A LIAISON TO ESTABLISH A RELATIONSHIP WITH THE POLICE AND FIRE SERVICES.

Initiate a fire reporting procedure. Post names and telephone numbers of contact persons on or near the door for use by the fire or police departments in the event of a break-in or fire. Involve the police and fire departments and your insurance agent in your arson prevention activities. Call your local police and fire departments to request a fire prevention and security evaluation. This may result in a reduction of your insurance premiums.

BE WARY OF STRANGERS.

Ask strangers to identify themselves - the innocent will not mind. Register guests and remove the registry from the building each night. Check the credentials of service personnel asking permission to enter. If in doubt, call their company to verify their identity. After many arson fires, neighbors remember that they were suspicious of a person or car but did not know what to do, or whom to call. Educate residents and neighbors regarding suspicious activity and what to do if they have concerns. Encourage them to make a record of the suspicious activity including: the date and time; a description of vehicles, license numbers, and persons; and immediately call the local police.

ESTABLISH A NEIGHBORHOOD WATCH PROGRAM.

The probability of arson increases during exciting holidays or celebrations as f Halloween, 4th of July, New Year's Eve, and major athletic events, as well as during periods of social unrest. During these events, there is a need for heightened awareness and surveillance. A rotating schedule of volunteer members to either stand watch, or provide irregularly scheduled patrols can be very effective.

CLEAN HOUSE.

The boiler room or heating room of many public buildings is a storehouse of unused and unneeded paper, trash, cleaning supplies, partial cans of paint and other materials that make a bonfire of the structure when arranged by the arsonist. Store all flammables, paint, gasoline, mowers, etc. outside in a locked storage building.

MAKE A MEDIA EVENT OF YOUR EFFORTS.

Arsonists seldom strike facilities that are ready for them.

ARSON PREVENTION CLEARINGHOUSE

To request additional information or publications call the National Arson Prevention Clearinghouse toll-free 1-888-60.-3100.

To report an arson fire call your local fire and police departments.

To provide information or to request an investigation of a suspected arson fire, call the Department of the Treasury's Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms 1-888-ATF-FIRE.

PLACE
STAMP
HERE

Federal Emergency Management Agency
National Arson Prevention Clearinghouse
16825 South Seton Avenue
Emmitsburg, MD 21727



PUT OUR INFORMATION TO WORK FOR YOU

I am interested in receiving the following kinds of arson prevention publications. Please send the following information.

- ☐ General arson prevention
- ☐ Church arson prevention
- ☐ Building community coalitions for arson prevention
- ☐ Juvenile firesetter information
- ☐ Fire and arson data about my community
- ☐ Public education information on fire
- ☐ Exemplary practices
- ☐ Technical assistance, how to form watch teams, etc.
- ☐ Available fire and arson grants
- ☐ Training related to arson prevention
- ☐ Arson investigation training
- ☐ Upcoming arson prevention events and activities

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____

Zip _____

Telephone _____

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